

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

/060 W

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R 272020Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4965

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 2140

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJ: HOSTILITY BETWEEN GOE AND PRESS CRITICS

REF: QUITO 2123 (NOTAL)

1. IN THE FIRST SERIOUS (I.E., OTHER THAN VERBAL) ACT AGAINST AN ANTI-REGIME JOURNALIST, HOOLIGANS REPORTEDLY BROKE INTO THE OFFICES OF EL TIEMPO, QUITO'S SECOND-RANKING DAILY, ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 26TH, CLAIMING TO BE LOOKING FOR COMMENTATOR AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER JULIO PRADO. ON THE SAME DAY, MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT (ADMIRAL) POVEDA, IN REPLY TO PRESS QUESTIONS ABOUT RECENT ANTI-GOVERNMENT ARTICLES, SAID "THERE IS FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THERE IS LICENSE."

2. POVEDA, RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF CERTAIN JOURNALISTS, SAID "IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THERE ARE A SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY WHO, FAR FROM LOOKING WITH SYMPATHY UPON THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND ITS BOLD POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, HAVE CHOSEN THE UNPATRIOTIC STANCE OF ATTACKING THE GAINS WE HAVE WON. THESE PEOPLE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT ALTHOUGH THERE ARE FOREIGN INTERESTS WHO MAY PRESSURE THEM TO DEFEND (THE FOREIGN INTERESTS), THEY ARE FIRST AND FOREMOST ECUA-  
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DOREANS, AND THEY SHOULD ACT LIKE IT. JULIO PRADO IS SOMEONE

WHO HAS BEEN SHELTERED BY THE ABSOLUTE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN ECUADOR, AND HAS USED HIS NEWSPAPER COLUMN TO ATTACK EVERYTHING DONE BY THE GOVERNMENT." DR. PRADO, HE ADDED, "IN HIS OBSESSION WITH OFFENDING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES, HAS EVEN REACHED THE SAD POINT OF HITTING OUT AT JOURNALISTS WHO ACCOMPANIED THE PRESIDENT TO THE OPEC SUMMIT MEETING, DESCRIBING THEM AS 'RABBLE'." I HAVE INVITED PRADO TO MY OFFICE TO SHOW ME PROOF OF HIS ALLEGATIONS, BUT HE HAS NOT COME, AND HIS ABSENCE SHOWS THE FOLLISHNESS OF HIS POSITION." POVEDA THEN REAFFIRMED THE EXISTENCE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, BUT ADDED "FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DOES NOT MEAN LICENSE, CALUMNY, LIBEL, THE VEILED INSULT, RIDICULE, OFTEN ON BEHALF OF VESTED INTERESTS, GENERALLY THOSE OF THE OLIGARCHY, AIMED AT OFFENDING THE GOVERNMENT, AND WHICH DO NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT DOES NOT INTEND TO ENGAGE IN UNSUBSTANTIATED ARGUMENT, IMPRUDENT ALLEGATIONS, UNSUPPORTED CRITICISM. RATHER, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL OBJECTIVES BY MEANS OF A WELL-THOUGHT THROUGH PLANNING SYSTEM, REACHING THE NATIONAL DESTINY THROUGH IRREVERSIBLE DEVELOPMENT, AND WITHOUT RETURNING TO THE OLD TIMES BY WHICH THE COUNTRY WAS DAMAGED, AND WHICH WE NEED TO FORGET AND PUT BEHIND US IF WE ARE TO BETTER THE FUTURE OF ALL ECUADOREANS." POVEDA ASSURED REPORTERS THAT NEITHER HAD PRADO BEEN HARASSED BY THE GOVERNMENT, NOR WAS THERE AN ORDER OUT FOR HIS DETENTION.

3. IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORTED BREAK-IN AT ITS OFFICES ON MARCH 26TH, EL TIEMPO PUBLISHED ALONGSIDE ITS PAGE ONE HEADLINE ON MARCH 27TH A BOX CAPTIONED "PROTEST", SIGNED BY "THE EDITORS", IN WHICH IT SAID: "YESTERDAY MORNING, TWO INDIVIDUALS WHO DID NOT IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, BUT WHOSE ACTIONS ARE EASY TO UNDERSTAND, BROKE INTO THE OFFICES OF EL TIEMPO AFTER KNOCKING DOWN THE WATCHMAN, WHO WAS BUSY CLEANING. THEY SAID THEY WERE LOOKING FOR DR. JULIO PRADO. THEY WERE TOLD THAT HE WAS NOT AT THE NEWSPAPER, AND THEN AT SIX THIRTY IN THE MORNING, THEY RUMMAGED ALL THROUGH THE BUILDING, EVEN POKING UNDER DESKS. EL TIEMPO PROTESTS THIS ACT, WHICH IS A VIOLATION OF THE LAW, AND OF THE NORMS OF CIVILIZATION, WHICH FORBID THE HARASSMENT OF PEOPLE AND

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PROHIBIT THE FORCIBLE ENTERING OF THE OFFICES OF A BUSINESS. THE MORE SO, SINCE THEY WERE AIMED AGAINST A MEDIUM OF INFORMATION WHICH, IF ONE IS TO BELIEVE THE REPEATED OFFICIAL DECLARATIONS, HAS THE IRREVOCABLE RIGHT TO INFORM AND GIVE OPINIONS. TO THIS PROTEST SHOULD BE ADDED ONE ABOUT THE PERSECUTION WHICH HAS BEEN UNLEASHED AGAINST A JOURNALIST BECAUSE OF HIS IDEAS, AND WHICH FLIES IN THE FACE OF ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL FRZZBOMSI K THAT OF THE PRESS,

AND RELIES ON GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO PROTECT THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE NEWS MEDIA."

4. CURIOUSLY, COMERCIO'S DESCRIPTION OF POVEDA'S MARCH 26TH PRESS CONFERENCE, WITH ITS HEADLINE "THERE IS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, BUT NOT LICENSE", APPEARED ALONGSIDE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR ENTITLED "YES THERE IS LIBERTY, BUT NOT LICENSE, IN CHILE" FROM GENERAL PABLO SCHAFFHAUSER, CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO ECUADOR. SCHAFFHAUSER DEFENDED THE CHILEAN JUNTA'S RESTRICTING THE ACTIVITIES OF "LEFTISTS AND EXTREMISTS WHO WOULD DAMAGE MY COUNTRY..."  
BREWSTER

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, DISPUTES, JOURNALISTS, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 27 MAR 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975QUITO02140  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750108-0746  
**From:** QUITO  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t1975039/aaaaaicb.tel  
**Line Count:** 127  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 QUITO 2123  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 12 SEP 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <12 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <14 OCT 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** HOSTILITY BETWEEN GOE AND PRESS CRITICS  
**TAGS:** PINT, EC, (PRADO, JULIO)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006